Ministry of Environment and Forests in 2003 which would practically stop any new mineral exploration and production in the scheduled areas;

(b) whether Government are aware that substantial portion of the country's minerals reserves are in the Scheduled Areas; and

(c) if so, the measures taken or contemplated to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) The Ministry of Environment and Forests has informed that guidelines dated 20.10.2003 issued by them do not prohibit any project including mineral exploration and production in the Scheduled Areas.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) In view of (a) above, does not arise.

Illegal mining

†2111. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that illegal mining at hills and rivers has been going on in the various States despite a ban imposed thereon; and

(b) if so, the details of the steps Government have taken to check such illegal mining in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) Instances of illegal mining in different States have come to the notice of the Government from time to time and have been forwarded to the concerned States for suitable action.

(b) To effectively curb illegal mining, State Governments have been empowered to make rules for preventing illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals under the provisions of Section 23C of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

Minerals in continental shelf/territorial waters

2112. SHRI THANGA TAMIL SELVAN: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.